

Business



front line

Our intrepid audience development team is out on the road, catching up with new model firms and finding out more about their businesses. Here's who they've been meeting

DECLAN'S DIARY



DECLAN CLANCY

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It is surprising to learn Mark Insley, managing director of Berkshire-based Ascot Wealth Management, used to be a trader in the City. However, while he may look fresh-faced, steely ambition and focus lie beneath the surface.

Insley launched the firm in June 2011. He says: 'I had five or six high-net-worth clients in Ascot, and then built on existing relationships in the City to create my personal client bank.'

He says a true wealth management firm must be able to solve every client problem. 'Most of them are very time-poor clients who appreciate the comprehensive service we can deliver for them. For instance, someone called me yesterday looking for house and contents insurance. It's not worth anything to us in monetary terms, but being able to drop everything and sort that out for him means so much in client satisfaction. For our clients, that sort of relationship is worth spending money on,' he says.

Tax planning and SEIS niche

Although Ascot offers a 'comprehensive' service, it has a niche in tax planning and Seed Enterprise Investment Schemes (SEIS).

'Tax and estate planning is integral to the service. Indeed, so far this year estate planning is what we've done the most. On the tax side, my personal niche is the use of the government-backed SEIS. It's an incredibly powerful tool for tax planning, and we've done a lot of work to carve that out as something we are renowned for. I invested £2 million of client money into the scheme last year,' Insley says.

Investing in graduates

Ascot has invested heavily in employing graduates and placement scheme students. 'I like

the idea of moulding people within the framework of our principles, in a business that has nothing to do with the past sins of the industry,' Insley says.

'I've employed a placement student for the past 14 months, and it's turned out fantastically. I've now offered him a contract for when he graduates.'

Insley has also taken on four more employees this year, alongside two graduates on a scheme run by Santander, which funds graduate roles and university internships in small to medium-sized enterprises.

'When they come back to me in nine months, I have a ready-made group of advisers for the future. The level of responsibility I place on them and exposure they get to top tier clients within months of joining is something that does not happen elsewhere,' he says.

Technological advances

He believes technology holds the potential for driving the future of Ascot, and he employs a technology support team in India.

'They create tools which help us make the way we work more efficient. These tools help us automate our workflow, and will in turn help with our attempt to scale the business. They also help us comply with the ever-changing needs of clients and advisers,' he says.

'We have recently developed a tool for our advisers that will remove the need for paraplanners in our business, and increase the accuracy and control of research and meeting preparation.'



Happy 59th birthday to Phil Stafford of Stafford & Co who celebrates on Sunday.



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Mark Insley Ascot Wealth Management

New Model Adviser®


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Ian Dickinson and William Bottomley of Lifetime

How and why to use investment trusts

DOUGLAS BROWN

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Advisers across the country share their tips on whether and when to use investment trusts

Ian Johnston

 Director
Cooper Johnston Wealth Management

HARROGATE


‘We have clients who have historically held investment trusts, and these have performed very well. We would consider using them where they would fit in with a client’s wider investment strategy, and particularly where they would give access to markets that may not be available to unit trusts and OEICs.’

Ultimately, it would come down to what’s more appropriate for the client, and it would be great to have the research tools to be able to compare them directly with OEICs that operate in the same market.’

John Chadwick

 Managing director
Chadwicks

CHESTER


‘Investment companies are certainly very competitive on price with unit trusts and OEICs, and there are many situations in which we like using them. However, they are not always suitable. The extra risk created by shifts between trading at discounts can add an extra level of uncertainty that would make closed-ended products unsuitable for those in retirement, and the gearing aspect causes some concern for us. Often a unit trust with the same mandate as its investment trust counterpart can produce similar results.’

Craig Palfrey

 Director
Penguin Wealth

CARDIFF


‘Investment trusts are something we don’t currently invest in, but now some of the issues over transparency have been dealt with, and more platforms are opening up to them, we’ve put it on the agenda for our next investment committee meeting.’

I think the big problem in the past was that there was not that much information out there about closed-ended investments. But now the chance to get in at a discount could provide great returns for clients and also add to the level of differentiation in our investment proposition.’

Mike Godfrey

 Director
Cube Financial Planning

ROMSEY


‘We’ve never been adverse to using investment trusts and companies and, although I can understand how traditionally commission-based advisers have had their view on closed-ended products changed by the retail distribution review, for us, it has had no impact.’

Investment trusts are useful where the client has the desire for higher returns and the extra tolerance for risk. If you identify the right type of clients, it’s about picking the right product at the right time, and that can often be a trust rather than a fund.’

Neville Pereira

 Financial services director
Lubbock Fine Financial Solutions

LONDON


‘We use investment trusts as part of our bespoke proposition to access certain markets, such as private equity or infrastructure, which may be unavailable in OEIC or unit trust investment. It is very much dependent on matching the risk profile of those clients who have a higher tolerance to risk.’

It’s interesting that, where investment and unit trusts are managed by the same manager, the closed-ended option often outperforms the open-ended one. For instance, if you look at Neil Woodford’s Invesco Perpetual High Income unit trust, while it produces good returns, it is outperformed by his investment trust.’

The team


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